

**Public Policy Committee**  
Montgomery County Commission on Aging

Notes of the meeting  
February 10, 2011

Attendees: Jack Sprague, Bob Tiller, Elaine Binder, Odile Saddi, Leslie Marks, John Honig

**1. State Department of Aging**

The rumor regarding possible closure of the state Department of Aging was just a rumor. The idea is not in the governor's budget proposal.

**2. State legislation**

(a) Odile reported that the Department of Aging received minimal budget cuts, virtually level funding. John mentioned that the analyst's analysis assumed almost full Federal funding; any cuts there might affect the state and local budgets too. Odile said that there were almost no questions or discussion on the Aging budget in the legislative hearing.

In speaking of the Medicaid budget, Odile said that 19,000 Marylanders are waiting for Medicaid waivers. Although it is much cheaper for Medicaid to help people in their communities rather than in nursing homes, the standard approach is a nursing home, and the Medicaid bureaucracy requires a waiver for the more economical alternative.

(b) Jack reported on the hearings on the MOLST bill. Parallel bills have been introduced in both chambers. Tammy Duell did very well testifying for the bill. She also brought a nun from Holy Cross along to testify for the bill. Shawn Brennan testified on behalf of the Montgomery County End-of Life Coalition. Some testifiers sought amendments which would significantly alter the bill. The senate committee chairman directed that a workgroup be formed to deal with the amendments. Our committee supports this bill and hopes that it is not weakened by crippling amendments.

(c) Jack explained a bill introduced by Senator King, which would remedy a problem in the law. Currently publicly-funded senior centers are required to provide personal data about participants to anyone who requests such information under freedom-of-information. The new bill, SB 230, would protect personal data, by directing senior center officials to withhold such information. A companion bill has been cross filed in the House of Delegates. The committee supports this bill.

(d) Senator Middleton introduced the Maryland Communities for a Lifetime Act, SB 822. Although it does include portions of the COA proposed bill, much of this bill is the same as last year's bill, missing the main point of the COA initiative. According to Jack, Middleton wanted something different this year but did not get it from the legislative drafting office. It was a consensus in the committee that "certification," which is at the heart of Middleton's bill, really has little meaning and value. The committee also discussed that building a community suitable for aging must involve some bottom-up activity, not totally top-down. Leslie suggested that local jurisdictions should come up with their own bottom-up strategic plans. The committee did not take a position on this bill. Jack, Bob and Leslie will discuss further.

(e) Senator Raskin introduced SB 247 on Seizure and Forfeiture, identical to his bill from last year. A parallel bill has been cross filed by Delegate Lee, HB 454. John will contact Bonnie Klemm and Robert Hill, seeking their views and interpretations of the bill. He will make sure that there are no aspects of the bill that the County is uncomfortable with. The committee supports this bill, and Bob plans to testify in support at the senate hearing.

(f) Senator Raskin intends to introduce a bill to permit absentee ballots to be sent automatically to anyone who wants to be on a permanent list. John asked if the legislation will insure that they will stop when a person moves or dies.

### **3. United Seniors of Maryland**

There was a discussion regarding how USM handles polling on issues. Bob is now on the Legislative Committee of USM, and that committee recommends bills to member organizations for a vote. After discussion it was decided that Bob will determine whether a bill meets COA principles, will the vote on behalf of COA and will notify the Public Policy Committee. Bob and Jack will consult with each other and with Elaine if there are any issues that arise in Annapolis that they believe the COA should take a position on.

There was also discussion on Ted Meyerson's suggestions at the Stakeholders Meeting, specifically his suggestion that it is important to work on budget matters throughout the year rather than only in a certain season when it may be too late.

There was discussion regarding the USM Rally in Annapolis on March 9. Bob offered to go and to give others a ride.

### **4. Other concerns**

Elaine Binder reported that she, Judy Welles and Spence Schron met with County Executive Leggett about the Commission's Call to Action. She said the meeting went very well.

--Transportation was the top issue. Mr. Leggett authorized COA to call a broad meeting, government and private, to develop an overall strategic plan for transportation involving all players. Leslie suggested the importance of agreeing on measurable goals for any plan.

--Mr. Leggett approved a COA representative to be ex-officio on the Senior Sub-Cabinet.

There was some discussion of trends seen in the new census data. The trend is toward a population that is less wealthy than in the county now, while the ever-increasing number of seniors will keep increasing the demands on county resources.

There was brief discussion of the report on restructuring county government.

John mentioned the importance of the Commission getting ready for the one-on-one meetings with county council members in April. Elaine mentioned the need to establish priorities for those discussions. We will be deciding our priorities at the March Commission meeting.

The next Public Policy Meeting is scheduled for March 10. Everyone was pleased with the new location for our committee meetings.